

Although Deacon Dorothy touched on history, the focus of her presentation was Native American spirituality, which has some common themes among the hundreds of tribes that exist in the United States: honor, love, respect, and listening—and, for the Navajo people, walking in beauty. All of those tribal traits are interconnected—similar to a waterwheel, which creates energy by continually receiving, then giving, then receiving and giving again. She shared story after story that gave us a clear idea of how those values were transmitted from the older generation to her generation, and how she is passing them on to her own children and grandchildren. Dorothy concluded with a beautiful prayer for peace and harmony that asked the Creator’s blessing on everything that exists on Mother Earth and in Father Sky.

After a lunch break (a light meal shared in community), our afternoon session began with each of us presenting a 45-minute “class” on a chapter/topic that we had been assigned from *Sacred Rhythms*, a book about spiritual transformation and the practices that support it. Amy’s topic was “Sabbath;” Susan’s was “Scripture;” and mine was “Prayer.” Even though we all had read the chapters, the “class” delved into areas that the book didn’t necessarily touch on, so each of the three presentations sparked discussions on issues and sub-themes and opinions about the chapter and/or the “class.” It was an interesting experience!

The remainder of the afternoon was devoted to refining a personal “Rule of Life” that we had been assigned to begin working on between our August and September classes. In developing a Rule of Life—a practice which has its roots and origins in the third and fourth centuries, when Christian monastic communities first came into being in the deserts of Egypt—there is an invitation to look at our relationships with God and the Church, others, and ourselves; it also asks us to examine our stewardship of resources. The word “rule” comes from a Latin word, *regula*, which refers not so much to a system of rules or laws, but rather to “*a way of regulating and regularizing our lives so that we can stay on the path we have set out for ourselves. A rule is like a trellis which offers support and guidance for a plant, helping it to grow in a certain direction*” (Brother David Vryhof, SSJE). A Rule of Life puts into words the things that a person values, and identifies ways in which those values can be achieved and lived. And that is one of the things that each of us in the Deacon Class of 2020 is working on, on an ongoing basis.

As the day neared its end, Deacons Robin Hollis and Veronica Ritson gave us our assignments for October's classes: to further refine our Rule of Life; to read Joan Chittister's book, *The Cry of the Prophet*, and be prepared to facilitate a discussion on two of the prophets highlighted in the book; and to begin to read the two other books that will be used in the November and December classes—*Prophetic Imagination*, by Walter Brueggemann, and *The Servant as Leader*, by Robert Greenleaf.

Our day ended with everyone coming together for Evening Prayer, then we all headed home, tired but still inspired to do our part over the next month to bring God's dream for us a little bit closer to reality.